

THE BELLED PALM
by
Allen Vaughn Elston

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AMERICAN FOUNDATION
FOR THE BLIND INC.

The Belled PALM

THIS PALM tree, like all the others, was leaning toward the sea. It was the tallest of its kind on the beach—a long, sleek stalk rising ninety feet to a banner of flying fronds. With each sway a melody came from it, for a bell swung high in the palm top—a bell silent only in the doldrums.

As a rule the bell was ringing. Even a faint zephyr was sufficient to coax sweetly murmuring chimes. And when the breeze stiffened across the lagoon from reef to shore, the tree swayed with a bold, deep-toned resonance. Gales lashed it to a fury of wild janglings. Each mood of the elements brought its own echo from the belled palm.

Today the bell was chiming as usual. The half-caste girl who lived in the grass-roofed house beneath it could hear it. Otherwise she would have been outside, looking both ways along the beach. Always she worried when a calm caught her man away from home.

But Dick Kennedy could hear the bell clearly enough, although at the moment he was fishing from a canoe nearly two miles down the lagoon. A battered, bleached helmet covered his head. His legs were bare, and he was as ragged as any white man ever was. But the sunlight illumined contentment on his strong, bearded face. A lusty jerk of his line, and he pulled in another fat bass. He knew it was a bass by the feel of its fins. His was the sensitive, accurate touch given to sightless men.

He put the line out again, drifting, always hearing that distant bell. He remembered Ila's words when, the day after taking it from the ruins of a hurricane-wrecked mission, she had climbed to hang it high in the palm tree. "So you will never be lost, my Richard."

Ila! Always waiting for him. He needed only to paddle toward those chimes and there she'd be. Or if he found himself groping in the jungle, he needed only to face that bell, and keep moving, to come surely to her gentle arms. He was sure she was beautiful although he had never seen her face. The shock of an explosion in the boiler room of a ship had robbed Kennedy of his sight just prior to his being left stranded on the beach.

Ila had taken him in and nursed him back to strength. Later, they had gone aboard a tramp to be married by its skipper. With the patience of her Polynesian mother and the resourcefulness of her Yankee father, Ila had made a snug home for Kennedy. Alf Honer, who ran the only store on the island, usually referred to them contemptuously as

"that blind beach comb-er and his woman," But the Kennedys didn't mind. They gave Honer a wide berth and lived their own simple life under the belled palm.

Dick Kennedy now drove his canoe toward the chimes of that invisible semaphore, and soon he could hear Ila shouting from the beach. "Richard, come quick! I have one beautiful surprise!"

There was a lilt of ecstasy in her voice as she came splashing bare-legged out through the shallows. She reached him before his keel grounded, and her arms went about his neck with an eagerness which almost upset the canoe.

She repeated joyously, "I have the grand surprise, my Richard."

Dick Kennedy laughed. "Something good to eat, is it? Turtle soup?"

"You are like all the men, you think only of to eat. But come."

He stepped out knee-deep and helped her beach the boat. Ila's excitement continued at high pitch, and she paid no attention whatever to his catch of bass. Instead, she took his hand and made him run with her to the house. It was a three-room house, scrupulously clean, the main room furnished with a wicker suite presented to them by a friendly captain. On three sides of it pandanus-leaf curtains could be raised or lowered like Venetian blinds.

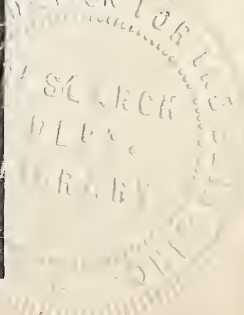
"Look, my Richard!" Ila danced about him, exulting. "The grand surprise."

Kennedy winced. That she should ask him to look proved that she was excited beyond all bounds. Of course he couldn't look. But he



by Allan
Vaughan
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ILLUSTRATIONS BY
DAN CONTENT





Janet broke one fingernail and Douglas bruised both thumbs, but the result was worth it. Even Norman approved of the finished coop.

icebox. He added that he'd fix it so no one would ever know. Except Norman and me, of course."

During the next hour Janet broke one fingernail and Douglas bruised both thumbs, but the result was worth it. Norman, once he had been installed in the coop, gave every evidence of being thoroughly at home.

Surveying their handiwork, Douglas said, "You know, I'm beginning to get a little attached to Norman. We've only known each other about five hours, but he's already done me two good turns."

"You mean getting rid of your maid, and—?" Janet stopped abruptly.

"Your hunch was correct," said Douglas, "even if you didn't get around to expressing it."

They had lunch together that day. Then dinner that night. And lunch the

following day. And dinner. Between meals, they managed to visit the planetarium, the zoo and a movie, to take several long walks and engage in innumerable telephone conversations—and to discover that each approved of the way the other looked and thought and talked and acted.

Janet was forced to admit to herself that she had never met anyone who had affected her the way Douglas Granger did. He liked the same things she did. She found herself able to speak to him the way you speak to none but your closest friends—in unfinished sentences, with half the thought left unspoken. He was, in short, almost too good to be true.

He wrote radio scripts—successful ones. He was amiable, cheerful, and confessed to twenty-seven years and one living relative, Aunt Edna, the turkey-giver. When a young man is as good-looking

as Douglas Granger was, when he is not only extremely anxious to please you, but what's more, does—you begin to have your doubts. Something *must* be wrong with him. Janet knew that much about males.

And then the subject of Thanksgiving dinner came up.

"Regarding this matter of who gets Norman's dark or white meat," Douglas said, "my first hunch was to have some of the people up from the studio. But since he's half yours by right of eminent domain—"

"What's eminent domain?"

"I don't know," he said frankly, "but it sounds as if it must have something to do with the case. The point is—will you help me eat him?"

"I'm afraid not. In the first place, the two of us couldn't begin to eat him. He must weigh twenty pounds. And besides—"

"All the better," Douglas said with satisfaction. "We can make six meals out of him. We'll be turkey-poor, maybe, but I don't pay much attention to what I'm eating when I'm with you. Say yes."

"I'd love to," Janet said, "but I can't. I'm leaving for Council Bluffs—Iowa, you know—on Monday evening. My parents live there. I thought it would be fun to surprise them by popping in for Thanksgiving dinner."

"Oh," he said. "Folks."

There was something about his tone which made her look up sharply. "Yes, folks," she said. "Anything wrong about that?"

For the first time she saw how Douglas looked when he was disturbed. His square chin seemed to become even squarer. "Plenty," he said gloomily.

Janet felt herself becoming irritated. "Plenty?" she said warmly. "Just what do you mean, plenty?"

"What I mean," he said, "is plenty. I mean there's a lot wrong with folks—with parents. I don't like them."

Janet looked at him with a hostile eye. Enormously fond of her father and mother, she took this as a personal affront. She had been right. There was something wrong with this man! He was a parent-hater!

"Just why," she said coldly, "do you have this peculiar attitude?"

"Several reasons," he said. "All of them unanswerable."

"You seem very sure about that," Janet said.

"I am. Let me explain. First, parents meddle. They can never permit a child to work out his own life."

"Not my parents," said Janet triumphantly. "My father and mother always say that I get *them* into trouble and wonder why don't I go away and leave them alone."

"The second reason," Douglas continued, ignoring her, "is their unfairness. A parent will always side with his or her kid against the whole world, thereby giving said whole world a violent pain in the neck."

"You wouldn't say that," said Janet, "if you could see—"

"And the third reason is that parents are chronic reactionaries. And completely old-fashioned. There probably never was a parent who didn't say at least once, 'When I was (Continued on page 121)'

*A black pearl in the South Seas—
and a story to set you speculating
on the power that lies in things
most men think are valuable*



There was silence and suspense in the little hut when the moment came to remove the bandages from Richard's eyes.

could feel the thing she placed in his hand. It was soft and velvety to his touch, and seemed to be a solid spheroid about the size of a large marble.

"It is one so-lovely pearl, Richard!" Ila cried. "A black pearl, the most big and beautiful I have ever see."

"You've been diving, Ila?"

She told him she had not been diving. She had simply put in the day going through a heap of shell which a ship's crew had traded them for a canoe-load of bonito. In one of the shells she had found this marvelous pearl.

"Such a pearl as you only dream of, Richard," she whispered. "And soon I shall tell you what we do with it. But we will wait until you have eat."

The girl chattered praises of the pearl

all the while she prepared a supper of fish and fruit. Later, she filled Kennedy's pipe and lighted it for him. He stretched comfortably on a grass mat with his head on her lap, and for a moment he forgot the pearl. The only curse of his blindness, he thought, was that he couldn't see Ila's face.

He heard a rustle as she produced from under the mat an Auckland newspaper left by the mate of the last mail boat. "I have not read you this before," Ila explained breathlessly, "because it is no use. But now it is so different. Now we are rich. Is it not so, my Richard?"

"What are you talking about, Ila?"

"The great doctor who is stay this winter at Papeete," she said. "This paper say he have heal the blind eyes."

Ila read aloud from an interview with a world-renowned oculist, a German-American named Max Steinmeyer who was on a cruise in the South Seas. His yacht was anchored at Papeete, where he had a cottage. "While blindness dating from birth," the interview quoted Steinmeyer as saying, "is generally hopeless, blindness from physical shock in adult life may often be corrected."

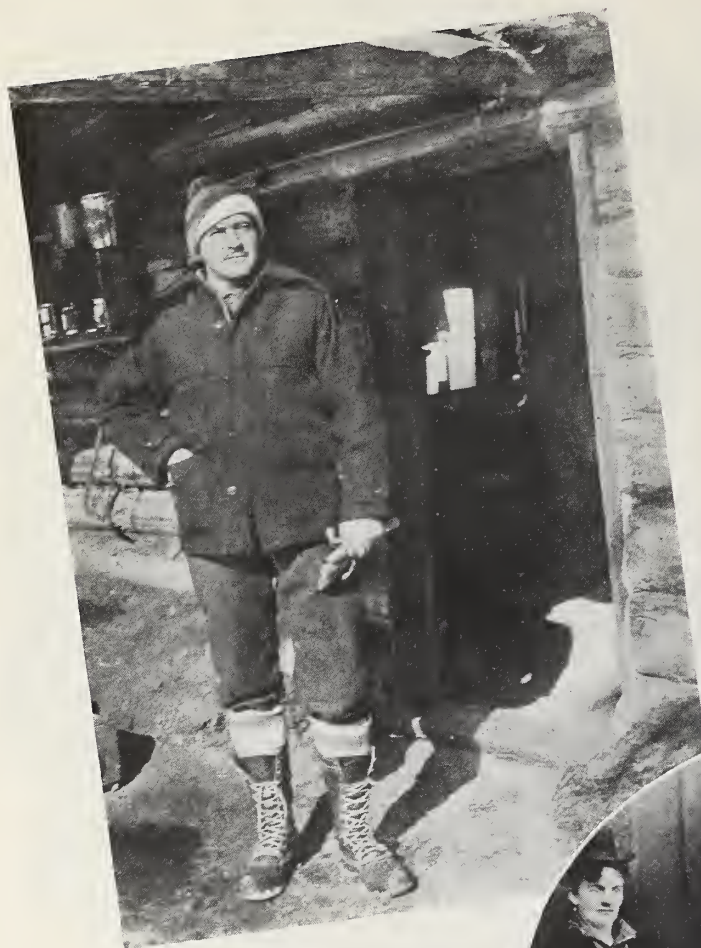
The article went on to cite specific cases wherein the famous eye surgeon had met with remarkable success in treating sightless men.

"Gcsh!" Kennedy exclaimed. "I bet a guy like that charges a plenty stiff fee."

"Of course," the half-caste girl agreed. "But now we can pay him with the pearl."

"You mean (Continued on page 114)

PAY STREAK



The author in Alaska. At right: General U. S. Grant (right center) visits the Bonanza Mines at Virginia City, Nevada, 1879.

A famous mining engineer opens his travel kit and spills a treasure of true tales encountered in his quest for gold in remote places

by **John Baragwanath**

Noted Mining Engineer



HAROLD KINGSMILL'S and my independence in the mining profession was not to last long. Our new desk chairs were scarcely warm, in fact, before Kingsmill received an offer to go back to Peru as general manager of all the Cerro de Pasco Company's operations. At the same time I had a chance to go with the American Smelting & Refining Company as resident engineer. We agreed to call our venture a day.

My new job was similar to the scouting work I had been doing for the Cerro de Pasco Company, except that now I had the entire hemisphere for my field. In the six years I was with the company I made two voyages to Colombia, two to Newfoundland (where I had a hand in opening up one of the biggest lead-zinc mines in the world), numerous trips to the gold fields of upper Ontario and Quebec, and many journeys out West and down into Mexico.

I had been with the company about a year when they sent me for the first time to Colombia. One of their scouts had discovered a gold property far back

in the jungle which, if all that they said about it was true, could be exploited profitably on a large scale.

Thus I found myself once more retracing a familiar route. At Colón I made connection with a United Fruit that was just starting out on a banana-collecting voyage along the north coast of South America. It was late at night when we sailed, and it was not until noon next day that I poked my nose on deck. We were slowly skirting the coast of Colombia.

I was lonely and bored. Tiring of pacing the deck, I went into the bar for a gin-and-tonic—and there was Rynerson.

I hadn't seen Rynerson since before

the war, when we were both working in the mines at Morococha. Naturally, we began to talk about the old days. Searching my memory for the names of those in the old American gang at Morococha, I happened to mention Smoky Carter. "Did you ever hear the story about him?" asked Rynerson. And then he told me this tale—

SMOKY

Smoky was a tall, angular, powerful man of about thirty-five, a miner with little schooling but a vast knowledge of the backwashies of the world and of the men—and women—one finds in such places. When I left Peru he and a

Vision, and the Vision's lips were on his.

"You don't understand," he muttered. "The tie—I never—"

"Of course, sweet," said the Vision. "They had them at Lacy's four years ago. I recognized it at once."

"But you—" said Bill. "But we— Linda—we mustn't. Ted. You and he—I mean, he and you—well, *aren't* you?"

The Vision chuckled. "You're so darling when you're honorable, sweet," she said. "I used to duck Ted in swimming, when he was a weedy little boy and I was a strong little girl, before Daddy lost his money. And Ted's never forgiven me. I frighten him still. Can't you see Ted's crazy about Mary Morrison?"

"The girl with the—"

"Oh, I think they're darling," said the Vision judiciously. "If you like pince-nez. It's a very suitable match. She loves graphs and things, and she's rich. I'm sorry I'm not rich, sweet. Do you mind? You see, I came out for those five rooms in the guest wing. It'll mean a nice little commission. We might have a honeymoon on it."

"Darling," said Bill Stratton wistfully, "I love you like anything—but would you mind explaining?"

"Didn't I, sweet? The Decorative Arts Shop at Gimbel's—I'm 'our Miss Cameron.' You see, Daddy lost his money suddenly, and—well, of course you have to wear nice clothes and see people—I get the store discount on the clothes. And it really works to look a little bit helpless and foolish. It makes people think it's their own idea—having a modern dining room or something—when it's really yours. Brubaker believes in bullying them, but my commissions last year were higher than Brubaker's."

"I bet they were," said Bill, staring at her with awe and affection. "Darling, do you always get what you want?"

"Practically always, sweet," said the Vision, snuggling against his shoulder. "You see, I don't want many things, so that lets me concentrate. I knew I wanted you the minute you started being firm with Mrs. Bulstrode. Nobody's ever

been firm with Mrs. Bulstrode before."

Bill Stratton was conscious of a cough. "Oh, Mr. Mathews," said the Vision, without moving. "I just got engaged to Mr. Stratton and we're going to have tea in a minute. Won't you join us?"

"Er—ah—thank you," said the embarrassed Mr. Mathews. "But—er—if I don't intrude—Mr. Wynant Senior would like to see Mr. Stratton."

"You can tell Mr. Wynant—" Bill began, but the Vision interrupted.

"He'll be right there," she said.

It was the same study and the same little gray man behind the big desk. But, this time Bill Stratton felt neither nervous nor dazzled. He smiled at the gray man equably. There was no longer any point in putting up a front.

"And why didn't you tell me about this, Stratton?" said Mr. Wynant, tapping a blueprint on his desk.

"About what?" said Bill Stratton, looking at the blueprint. "But that's my henhouse!" he said slowly.

"Of course it is," said Mr. Wynant peevishly. "The only really satisfactory one I've seen in twenty years. And I had the devil of a time getting the plans from the government and finding out who drew them. Well?"

"Why, I didn't know you'd be interested," said Bill.

"Interested?" said Mr. Wynant, and a cold flame lighted in his eye. "As President of the Poultry Fanciers' Association? As a corresponding member of the Dorking Club of England? As a man who has played his own small part in the improvement of the silver-laced wyandotte? Surely you must have known!"

An unworthy impulse woke in Bill Stratton. Vaguely he remembered a casual remark of Ted's: "Oh, Father's out with those infernal chickens again. I honestly believe he's more interested in them than he is in the Wynant Foundation!" It would be so easy to go into a graceful little speech on Mr. Wynant's well-known love for his feathered friends. He fought the impulse down.

"I'm sorry, sir, I'd forgotten."

"Spoken like a man!" said Mr. Wynant. "And yet"—his eyes gloated over the blueprint—"your employment of the trap nest, for instance. Genius, sheer genius! Tell me what inspired you?"

"Well," said Bill modestly, "I'm not crazy about chickens. But when I had to design for them, I pretended I was one and tried to think what I'd like."

"Genius!" said Mr. Wynant. "But you should have told me. Then I would have understood—eccentricities of genius—stories about ties and things . . . I hope I didn't hurt your feelings at our other interview?" he queried anxiously.

"You did—a lot," said Bill. "But you were perfectly right."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Wynant. "Misunderstanding—information not at my disposal." He tapped the blueprint. "Fact is, Stratton, after this, we simply must have you. Anybody who can do this—kind of man we want with us. Well?"

"It's decent of you, sir," said Bill. "But you must understand. I'm not a prominent architect. I'm broke. I've been on relief. I've got my plans and my models—that's true. And ideas. But—"

"Pooh!" said Mr. Wynant. "State Experimental Station tells me that the drop in disease-incidence among young pullets in this house of yours is simply amazing. And if you can build houses for hens, you can build them for humans. Hens are much harder to suit."

"It's a deal," said Bill Stratton. "But the Wynant Foundation will have to advance me some money. I expect to be married and I want to buy a ring."

"Excellent," said Mr. Wynant. "Marriage! Best thing in the world for a young man. And now, if you'll just—" His eyes went to Bill's neck and rested there for an instant. "Eccentricities of genius," he muttered. "My dear boy, I hate to mention it—but wouldn't you like Jenkins to bring you a necktie?"

"Oh, that's all right," said Bill. "My fiancée's going to buy me one with chickens all over it. Silver-laced wyandottes. I don't know where she'll get it yet, but you can trust Linda."

The Belled Palm by Allan Vaughan Elston (Continued from page 51)

get him to come here all the way from Papeete? A thousand miles?"

"He would come for this so beautiful pearl," she insisted.

"Maybe—if it's worth enough," Kennedy said doubtfully. "I guess we better find out. I'll go ask Alf Honer. He's a crook—but he knows pearls."

This low-lying island of Yoluho was sparsely settled, with a small native village at each end and its swampy inland jungle entirely without population. Honer's store and post office was midway between the villages. The island being about ten miles long, it was five miles either way from Honer's to a settlement.

But the Kennedys' cottage was only a few hundred yards from the store, and with every stir of air Honer could hear the bell. Its purpose amused him, since he possessed that peculiarly cruel sense of humor which can laugh best at helplessness or distress. He was a fat, red-faced man with small sly eyes and a mind which was eternally scheming petty frauds against all comers. The slovenly Marquesan couple who acted as his clerks would have deserted him long ago except that they were waiting to collect back pay. The post office would have been taken from him long since, had there been any other white trader on the island.

A small steamer dropped anchor once a month, calling for mail and what copra

or shell Honer had accumulated. Although between boats Honer saw no other white man except Kennedy, he enjoyed isolation. He liked to sit alone and drink himself into a glow of importance.

Because Honer delighted in obscene jokes, Kennedy rarely permitted him to enter the store. This evening she came with him only to the steps, where she waited while Kennedy groped his way across the veranda and through the door.

Honer was seated by the counter, drinking. Kennedy knew he was there only when the trader challenged gruffly, "Well, whadda yer want?"

Kennedy advanced with the black pearl in the palm of his hand. "Can you give me an idea what it's worth, Honer?"

A tension of avarice gripped Honer. Instantly he wanted that pearl more than he had ever wanted anything. It was large and perfect, and the sheen of it held him speechless for a moment.

He took the pearl from Kennedy's hand, moved with it nearer to the light. At least sixty pearl grains, he guessed. Brilliant and absolutely flawless. At ten thousand dollars it would be a gift.

"About how much would it bring?" Kennedy inquired again. He was expecting some false answer from Honer, but he hoped to divine from the glibness of the man's lie the pearl's true value.

"Lemme put 'er under a glass," Honer said cautiously.

Moving behind the counter, he slipped the pearl into his shirt pocket. Under the counter was a box of smooth spherical beads, of all sizes and colors, which were traded to the natives for copra.

Honer selected a smooth black glass bead, approximately the size of the pearl.

To Kennedy he announced, "Ain't worth much. First place, it ain't no true pearl. Fuller flaws, and they's a seam o' fossil right through the middle. Me, I wouldn't give a quart o' gin fer it."

"Thanks," Kennedy answered grimly. The crude exaggeration of the appraisal told him a good deal.

He let his right fist close over the bead Honer put into his outstretched hand. Quickly aware of the substitution, he poised himself for a punch, gauging the distance to Honer's jaw by the smell of the man's gin-soaked breath.

This, Kennedy knew, must be a one-punch knockout.

He whipped to Honer's chin before the trader had the faintest notion it was coming. His head went back and his feet went forward. He struck the counter with a jolt and slithered to the floor.

When Alf Honer came to, his hand went to his shirt pocket. The pearl was gone; in its place was the glass bead.

"But I'll have it yet," he swore. Nothing could cheat him of that pearl.

No inkling of a plan to recover it came to Honer until the morning of the next

of the big names. Well, we shall go on searching."

"But I—" said Bill. "But you—"

"You see," droned Mr. Wynant, "when Theodore mentioned meeting you, I became interested. You were one of Theodore's classmates. You had graduated from the Beaux-Arts. Investigation—"

"Investigation?" said Bill. "Then you knew all the time—and yet you—"

"I assure you," said Mr. Wynant primly, "that everything I knew of you up to your arrival here predisposed me in your favor. Then you arrived. Well, Stratton, put yourself in my place."

"I arrived," said Bill slowly, "looking and acting like a fake. And I spent my time being the life of the party when I wasn't acting the great 'I Am.' Oh, I get it. You don't have to draw the picture."

"I wouldn't draw it so colorfully," said Mr. Wynant. "But—well, I was disappointed. You're staying for dinner?"

"No, thank you," said Bill. "I must get back—to my large and lucrative practice," he added defiantly.

"Perhaps that might be wiser," said Mr. Wynant gently. "I'll tell Jenkins to have your bags packed."

"I didn't have a bag," said Bill. "And you're quite right to act like this. I don't blame you. I've been behaving like a first-class fraud. But you're wrong about one thing. I could design your town. I've spent the last three years designing such towns, whenever I could get something to draw on."

"I've looked at every exhibit I could see and read every book I could find and built my own models out of shoe boxes and chewing gum. I know where the woman wants her cookstove and the man wants his garden patch—and where to put the playground so the kids'll play on it. You can't tell me anything about low-income groups—I've been there. And sometime I'll get a chance to build a town. And when I do, it'll make yours look like a rural slum. Good-by, Mr. Wynant—and thank you."

"Good-by," said Mr. Wynant quietly.

"Bill Stratton! What on earth are you doing?" said the Vision urgently, as she came out upon the secluded side porch.

Bill Stratton looked up from the curious little heap of shredded material in the big brass ashtray. "Setting fire to a villa on the Riviera," he said grimly.

"Bill! Your tie! You're burning it up!"

"Don't worry," said Bill Stratton, with a short laugh. "It won't burn. It won't even do that. Just as well. If it did, it would probably blow up the house."

"What are you talking about, Bill Stratton?" said the Vision.

"Oh, you might as well know," said Bill bitterly. "I'm a fraud, that's all. There never was any Riviera villa any more than I ever paid a hundred dollars for that tie. I'm not a successful architect. I'm the hell of an unsuccessful one. The biggest job I've had since I left the Beaux-Arts was designing model henhouses for WPA Project X9837L. And I've just lost the chance of a lifetime by trying to bluff Ted's father. All in all, you behold before you the King of Duds."

"It's nice when your jaw sticks out like that, Bill," said the Vision. "I like it. Of course, it makes your ears red. But I like that, too."

"Woman!" said Bill. "Stop talking about my ears! Do you understand what I'm saying? I'm a fake; I'm a failure; I'm getting thrown out on my ear!"

"Now you're talking about your ears," said the Vision. She added unexpectedly, "Poor sweet! Tell Mother!"

"Woman!" said Bill, and stopped. Incredibly, his arms were around the

OH BEAVER!



How long since you've seen a barber?

If you're keeping a red hot date, hitting the boss for a raise, applying for a job or calling on a big prospect—

By all means see your barber!

When you want to look your most impressive best, invest in a haircut, a manicure, a shave and a shine.

And when the barber reaches for the brush and comb, tell him to top off his handiwork with Kreml.

Wave aside those sticky, gummy, perfumed concoctions that glue hair down tight to the scalp and make you look like a gigolo.

Say K-R-E-M-L... Kreml, and point right at the big yellow bottle. Nothing like Kreml for chasing dandruff off a snowy scalp.

Nothing like Kreml for stopping excessive falling hair and stimulating hair growth.

Nothing like Kreml for helping hair to new life and lustre.

A marvelous hair dressing, not sticky or greasy, it makes the most stubborn hair lie down beneath the brush and comb; makes every Kreml customer a walking advertisement for the shop.

Ask your barber for his special Kreml Treatment—consisting of a cleansing, invigorating treatment of the hair and scalp with Kreml Tonic and the new Kreml olive oil base Shampoo.

KREML



REMOVES DANDRUFF AND CHECKS FALLING HAIR

NOT GREASY—MAKES THE HAIR BEHAVE

mail day, when Kennedy and Ila came again to the store. This time they entered hand-in-hand to mail a letter. Honer sat by the counter, sulking. His jaw still ached from Kennedy's punch.

Ila, having been assured by Kennedy that posted mail was inviolable, went directly to the slot. She dropped a thin, flat letter through it, then took Kennedy's arm and led him out. Neither of them exchanged a word with Honer.

When they were gone, he began wondering to whom those beach waifs could be writing. Were they telling tales on him? Complaining to the administrator about his attempt to steal a pearl?

He retrieved the Kennedys' letter, and to his surprise he found it addressed to a Doctor Max Steinmeyer at Papeete.

Without the least compunction, Honer steamed it open. He read:

Dear Dr. Steinmeyer:

My wife is writing this for me, I myself having been blind from shock these last ten months. If you will come here and do what you can to restore my sight, your fee will be a flawless pearl of not less than fifty pearl grains.

Will you come, sir? I live at Honer's Cove, Yoluho Island, in the house under the belled palm.

Respectfully,

Richard Kennedy

Honer's lips curved cunningly as he burned the missive. Then he wrote a letter of his own, addressed it to a David Coxon at Apia, the Samoan Islands, and concluded with the following caution:

... Take care, Dave, that you keep away from me until you get your mitts on the pearl. Otherwise they'll spot you for a ringer.

Yours for easy pickings,

Alf Honer

When, a month later, Dave Coxon

booked out of Apia on the steamer *Narcossa*, the name he gave the purser was Doctor Max Steinmeyer of New York.

Coxon looked the part in every subtle detail. He wore a neat Vandyke beard, gold-rimmed spectacles and immaculate whites, properties which had served him well in his career as a sea-going swindler. What Coxon lacked of Honer's crude cunning he more than made up in suavity and an ability to enact rôles.

The professional satchel in his cabin was filled with medical instruments, and gave off the pungent odor of acids and antiseptics.

When the *Narcossa* dropped anchor in the lagoon at Honer's Cove, Alf Honer was sitting on the end of the mole. Coxon passed him without the slightest sign of recognition.

Bag in hand, brisk and professional, the newcomer knocked at the door of the little house beneath the belled palm. The rare beauty of the young woman who opened the door took Coxon's breath. He composed himself, however, and assumed what he conceived to be a German accent. "My name is Steinmeyer. I haf come to see a Herr Gennedy who cannot see with his eyes."

Ila stared at him. Then rapture slowly flooded her face. She had scarcely dared to hope the great doctor would come.

"Oh, Richard, he have come!" she cried ecstatically. "The Doctor Steinmeyer have come from Papeete."

It was hard for Kennedy to believe it. But the firm clasp of the caller's hand, together with the medical smell of the satchel he brought in, reassured him.

"You can make his eyes to see?" Ila implored anxiously.

Coxon smiled at her. "Who gan say, Frau Gennedy? Each case is different. For this one we gan only hope."

He produced from his satchel an array

of extremely convincing instruments and lenses.

For studious minutes he stared through them at Kennedy's sightless eyes. Then he produced an assortment of test tubes and vials containing colored liquids. Some of these were odiferous acids, chosen purely to impress Ila. Others were harmless solutions of pink, green and blue water. He dropped three drops of pink water into each of the eyes.

After waiting half an hour, he examined the eyes again with a lens.

Finally Coxon announced, "I haf goot news, Frau Gennedy. Once I haf a gase like this with a soldier in the Belgian Congo, so I know egsactly what to do. Gif me three days, and perhaps your goot husband will haf new eyes."

Ila was speechless. Hope glorified her face. The same light illumined Kennedy. His lips murmured thanks to Coxon.

Then Coxon cleared his throat. "There is the madder of a vee," he said apologetically. "We dogtors are not mercenary, Frau Gennedy, but I haf a long way come at great egspense . . ."

"Of course," Ila said quickly. "You want to see the pearl."

She took it from its hiding place in an old gourd. At the sight of it Coxon's eyes glittered. Its brilliance made him seize it almost too eagerly.

He managed, however, to subdue his eagerness. After weighing the pearl in his palm for a moment he dropped it in his pocket and turned briskly to the patient. "It will be suvvenient," he said.

After ordering the pandanus-leaf curtains dropped so that no sunlight could enter the room, he resumed his farce—green drops, blue drops, pink drops. Coxon poured acids from one vial to another so that their odors would impress the Kennedys. For hours he massaged Kennedy's forehead. Then he bandaged

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the eyes tightly. "It will be enough for today," he announced.

By that time the *Narcossa* had weighed anchor, and Coxon sighed with regret that he hadn't dared go with her. But always he had taken an artist's pride in the finesse of his swindles.

For three days he seemed to treat the patient with skill and energy. Countless times he changed the bandages. Over and over he dropped in the blue drops, the pink and the green.

Late the third afternoon he turned to Ila with an expression of triumph. "I think we haf success, Frau Gennedy. I gannot be sure, but I think when you take away the pandage, tomorrow, he will see your lofely face."

Ila sank to her knees by the cot sobbing. "Do you hear, my Richard? Tomorrow you shall see."

Kennedy kissed her. "Tomorrow," he said huskily, "it won't be dark any more."

Outside, as a breeze stirred the palm tree, a bell chimed a melody of hope.

Alf Honer, at his store, had been waiting impatiently for three days. Why didn't Coxon show up with that pearl? The storekeeper was all but drunk when Coxon at last appeared.

"You got it?" Honer asked thickly.

"You know me, Alf," Coxon grinned as he exposed the pearl.

Honer snatched it eagerly. His sly eyes devoured it while Coxon sat down and poured himself liquor.

"How we gonna split this, Dave?" Honer asked.

"That's easy, Alf," Coxon responded genially. "I got a buyer lined up at Papeete. When I turn the pearl I'll send you your half in cash."

Honer's eyes narrowed. He could read Coxon like a book. But he was too shrewd to show any suspicion. "Whadda yer figger to get fer it, Dave?"

"It ought to be a cinch for ten thousand, U. S.," Coxon thought. "Maybe a shade more or less. Tell you what I'll do, Alf. I'll take all the gamble myself."

"Whadda yer mean, Dave?"

"I'll give you my check for five thousand right now, Alf, and keep the pearl myself."

Honer almost laughed. Coxon would give him a check, of course, but it would be worthless.

Yet again Honer concealed his suspicions. To voice them might tip off the counterplot which was churning in his own brain. "Make it six thousand, Dave," he suggested, "and it's a deal."

Coxon promptly produced a checkbook and wrote the check. Honer pouched it and handed the pearl to Coxon.

"Now, how about my getaway?" Coxon asked.

"I got it all framed," Honer said. "You leave here before dawn tomorrow, Dave. Means a six-mile hike, but it's the only way to get clear."

"A six-mile hike where?"

"Across the island to an abandoned plantation on the north shore. I've lined up a native fishing yawl to pick you up there about sundown tomorrow. It can take you to Rader's Island."

Coxon grimaced. A six-mile hike through the jungle didn't appeal to him. "Suppose I get lost," he objected.

"Not a chance," Honer assured him. "I'll show you the way myself."

At dawn the two men set forth, Honer in possession of a worthless check and Coxon with the pearl. Coxon carried his medical satchel, to the contents of which sandwiches and a quart of gin had been added.

Honer, as the guide, naturally took the lead, his only fear being that Coxon

might see the bulge at his hip pocket. He did not fear a shot in the back, since Coxon had the pearl.

For the first hour of travel they could hear the bell in the south-shore palm. Gradually the sounds grew dimmer.

"Hellava place!" Coxon complained as he tripped over a root. "Ain't there any roads on this island?"

Honer shook his head. "And you won't see any natives in here this season," he said. "With the bonito runnin', they're all out fishin'."

The jungle became denser. Creepers overgrew the path, obscuring it for long stretches. Often they had to pick their route cautiously across swamps.

"You said six miles," Coxon fretted. "I bet we've come that far already."

"We've come less than two," Honer corrected. "Listen. Hear that bell?"

The wind chanced to be blowing briskly from Honer's Cove. On the wings of it they could still hear occasionally the faint ringing from the belled palm.

"A guy couldn't get lost if he tried," Honer grinned. "He'd just need to keep movin' toward that bell and it'd bring him out right at my store."

They pushed on until they heard surf breaking on the north shore. Emerging on a beach, they found the abandoned plantation. No sign of life could be seen other than a few rangy pelicans.

Entering the old house, they brushed away cobwebs and advanced to a rude table. Coxon brought out the gin. Honer found two cracked glasses, wiped the dust from them and filled them.

After drinking, Honer went outside on the pretense of looking for signs of the yawl. No yawl was coming, of course. It was all a ruse to lure Coxon to this isolation. Outside, Honer merely took a .38 gun from his hip pocket and slipped it into the front of his shirt.

Meanwhile, Dave Coxon, inside the house, was beginning to sense his peril. Coxon was not armed; he had never been a gunman, but he had not failed to note the bulge at Honer's hip.

His wits began searching for some means of defense, in case Honer should assault him. His medical satchel gave him an idea. From it he took a vial of nitric acid, poured the contents into his own gin glass and was toying with the glass, when Honer came in and sat down opposite him.

"Here's looking at you, Dave," Honer's left hand raised his liquor glass, while his right drew a cocked gun from his shirt. For a moment the table hid it from Coxon. Then Honer whipped it into view. As he fired, Coxon dashed the contents of his glass into Honer's eyes.

A bullet found Coxon's heart at the same instant liquid fire found the eyes of Alf Honer. The gun slithered from his hand to the floor.

He sat there a long while with his hands clasped tightly over his eyes. White-hot swords seemed to burn deep into his brain. Gin only made your eyes smart, he thought desperately. It couldn't blind you. In a few minutes, he was sure, he could open his eyes and see.

He knew Coxon was dead. He had heard him fall, and since then there had come from him not even a groan. In a little while Honer could take the pearl and be gone.

But the frightful pain in his eyes grew worse instead of better. The flesh about them was blistered. Honer screamed when he took his hands away. Day had become night! That accursed gin had seared away his vision! He was blind!

Desperately he kept telling himself it couldn't be, that soon the pain would be gone and he would be able to see. But torturous hours passed, and the world

remained a black void to Alf Honer.

At last he groped his way around the table, fumbling until he found Coxon. His searching fingers finally touched the pearl. He took it, and with hands outstretched before him, groped for the doorway and passed through it.

He could feel the sun's rays and hear the breakers, but he could see nothing. Panic gripped him. Without eyes, how could he find food or drink?

He knew he couldn't follow the shore line either way to a village, for this north shore of Yoluho was spiked with promontories. There were sheer cliffs against which the sea beat, with here and there soggy mangrove inlets. His only chance was to go back the way he had come.

So Honer turned his back to the sea sounds and groped slowly inland. He failed to find the path, but he did stumble upon a spring of fresh water.

The agony in his eyes continued. He lay by the spring for hours, until jungle crickets told him it was night. Then mosquitoes drove him, screaming in profane hysteria, back to the house.

Inside, he tripped over Coxon's corpse and lay beside it moaning.

Through a siege of terrifying weeks Honer groped futilely through darkness. Lashing rains came. Thorns tore at his flesh, as again and again he tried to struggle south across the island.

Always the jungle balked him. He tripped over vines and plunged headlong into mires. Never did he get beyond the sound of the north-beach breakers. Always he went creeping back to the old house for shelter.

He still had the pearl, but it served only to heap irony on despair. What good was a pearl one couldn't even see?

The dead man had made the house untenable and Honer had finally dragged the body out to a thicket.

Fever came to him and he was prostrate for a fortnight. Helpless amid a plague of insects, he lay calling down profane maledictions upon a universe which denied him light.

When the fever broke, Honer found that his sightless eyes no longer pained him insufferably. He groped his way out of doors, wretchedly weak but with a clear mind, realizing exactly what he must do to be saved.

He must grope southward to mid-island. From there, when the wind was right, he should be able to hear the bell in the south-shore palm. With that guide he could not go wrong.

Turning his face to the jungle and his back to the sea, Honer set forth doggedly. Soon he was struggling in a labyrinth of high roots, while spiny saplings slapped his cheeks. He kept on desperately, crawling at times, resting at intervals, keeping direction only by the sea sounds behind. As these diminished, he knew he was progressing inland.

When he became fagged beyond endurance, he slept for hours. Then he pushed dismally on. Once a bog barred his way and it seemed miles before he had skirted it. The distant sound of breakers began to confuse him. From which shore did it come? The sea, of course, was on all sides of the island.

Assuming the sound came from the north shore, he pressed on, fighting his way inch by inch. Fruit was plentiful and there were pools from recent rains.

Days later, a high wind came from the south and he heard the faint chiming of a bell. The sound thrilled him. He moved eagerly toward it, relieved at last of all confusion.

A long, graceful yacht rode at anchor in the lagoon at Honer's Cove. Its

shore boat was drawn up on the beach.

Under the belled palm, three inmates of a grass-roofed house felt the grip of an intense suspense. Richard Kennedy lay on a couch, his heart pounding hopefully. Ila stood by looking anxiously up at a tall gray-haired man, who said, "It has been a most interesting case. One worth coming a long way to serve."

"He will see?" Ila whispered.

"I see no reason why not," Doctor Max Steinmeyer answered. "There is no atrophy of the optic nerve. Purely an external injury. A scarred cornea. In that case, a corneal transplantation should restore sight."

"And you have done that, my doctor?"

"Yes. What I have done is to resect the corneal membrane and graft on the corneal membrane of a rabbit. It has been done before, in Chicago, in Vienna, and has been successful."

Steinmeyer looked at his watch. It was not yet time to remove the bandages.

"You have not yet tell me," Ila said softly, "why you came here."

Steinmeyer smiled. "What else could I do? When the captain of the *Narcossa* told the skipper of my yacht, at a way port, that I had been here to treat a patient, my professional reputation was at stake. There was nothing I could do but come along and make good."

"You are so good to come!" Ila said.

Steinmeyer patted her hand. "Not at all, my dear. I was just cruising around. And now—let us observe the result."

Tenderly he removed the bandages.

Kennedy looked up into a dim grayness where an angel seemed to hover. Yes, she was lovelier even than he had dreamed. His arms reached out. "Ila!"

"Richard, you see me?" Ila bent until her wet cheek touched his own. Rapture sang in her heart.

"Yes, I can see you, Ila dear," he said.

Overhead, the belled palm pealed a joyous anthem.

The wonder of it was almost more than Ila could bear. She lay sobbing in Richard's arms until Steinmeyer said gently, "We must not excite him, please."

Ila stood on tiptoes to kiss the surgeon. "But we have the duty to pay you," she said. "And we are poor; we have nothing. Once we have a fine pearl for you, but now it is gone."

"Never mind the pearl," Steinmeyer protested with a slight break in his voice. "The gift of sight, my child, is more precious than all the pearls of the sea."

"But we have the duty," she insisted, "to pay you something."

As she spoke, the bell chimed again and Steinmeyer turned his face upward toward the sound.

"If you insist," he said to Ila, "you may give me the bell as a souvenir of this strange adventure. Your husband will not need it any more."

"But of course!" Ila cried happily.

She kicked off her sandals, ran outside, and began climbing the palm.

Far away in the jungle Alf Honer could still hear the bell. For painful hours he had been fighting toward it.

Suddenly the sound failed to reach him. That was strange, because the wind still blew. He waited, straining his ears, but he heard nothing. Just a little way back he had heard the chimes, so he reasoned that his last advance must have been on a wrong course.

He turned and fought his way back in the opposite direction. Why didn't the bell ring? He continued to thrash through thickets, growing weaker and more confused with each passing hour.

Silence doomed him. Winds blew, but the voice of the belled palm called to him no more . . .



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Pay Streak by John Baragwanath (Continued from page 59)

sheepskin barely dry, when news of a gold strike in Porcupine filtered down from the North Country. That winter found him in Porcupine working for a Toronto mining engineer.

One day, on a flying visit to Toronto, he ran into a New York broker named Spencer.

"Do you know the Brown claims twelve miles out of South Porcupine, and when are you going back?" Spencer asked.

"I have heard of them, that's all—and tomorrow night," Joslin answered.

"Listen," Spencer said, "I've just taken a short-time option from Brown. He tells me his vein is over four feet wide, stripped for three hundred feet and has eighty places showing free gold in that distance, but he has never seen the claims. He gets his information from the man who did the assessment work. You get up there, verify the gold showings and shoot me a wire that it's as represented, and I'll cut you in for twenty-five percent of whatever I make."

Joslin hurried back to Porcupine and struck out for the little log cabin on the Brown claims. In answer to his shout on arrival, the man who had done the assessment work appeared. He took Joslin for a look at the showing. There it was—a beautiful white-quartz vein, stripped of moss and vegetation. At intervals the white surface was marked by circles drawn in blue chalk. Each circle enclosed a bright speck of yellow gold, and there were eighty circles.

Joslin pulled out his little field microscope, sprawled flat on the cold white vein and brought the center of the first blue circle into focus. Magnified, it stood out—a thin scale of gold hugging the sides of a little indentation.

Curious, he thought, hunching along to look at another. This was just like the first—as if the gold scale had been pushed into a crack in the quartz by a nail or an awl. Another and another—they were all the same.

And then he knew. The gold scales had not been placed there by nature; they had been punched into crevices of the quartz by the hand of man.

As Joslin trudged over the rough trail on his way back to South Porcupine, indignation began to get the better of him. By the time he reached town, he had worked up a towering rage. He strode into the telegraph office, and scrawled a one-word message: "Salted."

A few weeks later Joslin came back to Porcupine from a trip into the bush, eager for news of the camp. There was news in plenty. One of the big mining companies of Cobalt had examined the Brown claims and made a cash payment.

He smiled as he asked, "Do they think they have something?"

"Rather," his informant said. "They took a large number of samples, avoiding the visible gold, and their samples averaged over twenty-five dollars a ton."

Joslin's smile froze. The man on the Brown claims had poked eighty little slivers of gold into a vein that was already rich!

Now, this story should end here. Joslin himself thought it was the end of the story, and of him. But soon the Brown claims were in the limelight again.

The Cobalt company had started work with a rush. Not waiting for an assay office to be fitted up, they took their samples every five feet as the shaft went down and had them sent to Cobalt to be assayed.

So great was their speed that the shaft was down fifteen or twenty feet before they had assay returns from the first

samples. The highest return from the whole bunch was less than a dollar to the ton.

The explanation was simple, but unparalleled for downright audacity. As Joslin had guessed, the assessment man had salted the vein in the first place. Moreover, when the engineers came, a friend of his hired out as teamster, and with the latter's help he had salted the first batch of company samples on their way to the railroad!

It seems to me the purplest pages in all mining history were written in the early days in the West. And of those chapters, none is more fascinating than the one carved with hammer and steel in the flanks of Mt. Davidson at Virginia City, Nevada, by those pioneers who opened up the Comstock Lode.

Sometimes when I am in San Francisco I drop in to see H. L. Slosson, Jr., who can spin many a yarn of the old days on the Comstock. His best story—about the rise of John P. Jones, one of the early Comstock bonanza kings—seems to verify Mackay's famous saying: "There is no rule in mining but the point of a pick."

BONANZA

Jones was a young Welshman who had come to California in the early 'fifties and had followed placer mining with indifferent success. A flyer in politics left him broke and he finally resolved to return to Cleveland, Ohio, where some of his relatives lived. He planned to go by sea and across the Isthmus of Panama. But a couple of hours before his steamer was to sail he bumped into Alvinza Hayward, a famous mining operator of California, who asked him to take charge of the Crown Point mine on the Comstock.

Without the slightest hesitation Jones accepted, though he knew almost nothing about quartz mines. When he reached Virginia City, he found the Crown Point in desperate financial difficulties. The mine had produced no ore for several years, and the company had levied many assessments. The shaft had reached a depth of a thousand feet, and drifts had been driven north and south and a long crosscut put in to the west. What made matters even worse was a report to the government by Rossiter W. Raymond, head of the Bureau of Mineral Statistics, that the vein material of the Comstock Lode was changing from the favorable quartz to calcite in depth.

Jones, with all the valor of ignorance, was undismayed. He ran a long crosscut to the east, scrutinized carefully the walls of the crosscut and found a stringer about three hundred feet east of the shaft which was the thickness of a man's finger and showed traces of ore. He started drifting south on this, and within one hundred feet the stringer had widened to a four-foot vein showing spots of fairly good-looking ore.

On the strength of this showing, Hayward, in San Francisco, began to buy, carrying Jones for a block of the stock. Soon the vein widened, running hundreds of dollars to the ton in gold and silver. Before the ore body was exhausted, the mine had produced thirty-five million dollars in precious metals and yielded over twelve millions in dividends. Jones was Nevada's newest millionaire.

The rest of the story has nothing to do with Jones but is worth telling because it shows how widespread the effects of such a discovery can be. The great Crown Point ore body extended into the Belcher, which within the next few years

produced over forty-five million dollars.

Nor was this the only outcome of Jones' audacity, for as a result of the excitement at the south end of the Lode, the north end was abandoned by speculators, and stocks of the various mines in this section were so depressed that it was possible for John W. Mackay and James G. Fair, backed by Flood and O'Brien, to acquire the Consolidated Virginia Mine. A few months later the great Bonanza was struck which yielded one hundred and sixty million dollars.

I have been saving for the end of this string of anecdotes a story which, I think, embodies the popular conception of the mining engineer better than any other on the tablets of my memory.

The man I shall call Jim Holden in the story that follows would have been Richard Harding Davis' beau ideal. One of the handsomest dogs that ever wore a sombrero, his life was as riotous as that of any character in a fiction thriller.

WHEEL OF FORTUNE

The creaking, coughing motor stage from Tonopah, powdered with alkali, came to a panting halt in front of Casey's Hotel, a famous desert establishment some three miles north of Goldfield. The door opened and four passengers climbed wearily to the ground.

The last man to leave the stage was an arresting figure. Well over six feet tall, broad-shouldered, with the narrow hips and flat back of a boxer, he got a long, admiring stare from the little group of loungers as he stepped into the lobby. He wore a soft white shirt loosely held together at the neck by a carefully knotted cravat, coat and breeches that must have been tailored in London, and high laced boots of dark brown leather. Indeed, he looked like a million dollars. At that moment, however, there were just two coins in his pocket, a silver dollar and a two-bit piece. He was broke.

Casey, who was sitting near the desk chatting with another man as the traveler walked in, jumped up.

"Jim!" he said. "I'm glad to see you, boy. Come over here and meet Pat Rafferty. Pat, touch flesh with Jim Holden, the best goddam mining man in Nevada. Come back in the bar, gents, and let's wash some of the alkali off our tonsils."

"Can't right now," said Holden, smiling. "I've got to see a man before supper. See you later." With that he strode out of the door and down the single street.

Holden's total baggage consisted of a toothbrush in an inner pocket. His having to see a man was pure fiction. He had to find a place to sleep that night. So he walked along the street until the little mining town petered out into a collection of dilapidated cabins.

He had gone perhaps a mile when he came to a deserted shack which he decided would do for the night. He closed the door on his newly acquired lodgings and started back toward the hotel.

As he stepped into Casey's back room he saw Rafferty at the bar with two acquaintances. "Come have a drink," invited Rafferty, and introduced his companions.

That drink was just what Holden needed. Then somebody else bought another round, which helped even more.

"Before I buy one," Holden said, "I'll just try my luck at that nearest wheel."

Taking out his dollar, without quitting his place at the bar, he flipped it neatly onto the roulette layout just as the croupier spun the wheel. The coin fell on seventeen-black. Seventeen-black won

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